

SPEECH  
OF  
MR. MINER, OF PENNSYLVANIA;

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE  
OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
ON TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY,  
JANUARY 7 AND 7, 1829,  
IN THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

Dar.  
E445  
D 6M66

UNIVERSITY  
OF PITTSBURGH  
LIBRARY



THIS BOOK PRESENTED BY

The Buhl Foundation

*Hon. Mr. Wm. B. Rensselaer*  
Miner, Charles  
"

**SPEECH**

OF

**MR. MINER, OF PENNSYLVANIA,**

**DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,**

**ON TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6 AND 7, 1829,**

**ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY AND THE SLAVE TRADE**

**IN THE**

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.**

**WITH NOTES.**

---

**WASHINGTON:**

**PRINTED BY GALES & SEATON**

**1829.**

Dar  
E445  
D6M667

## SPEECH.

---

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, *Tuesday, January 6, 1829.*

Mr. MINER offered the following preamble and resolutions :

WHEREAS the Constitution has given to Congress, within the District of Columbia, the power of "exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever."

AND WHEREAS the laws in respect to slavery within the District have been almost entirely neglected; from which neglect, for nearly thirty years, have grown numerous and gross corruptions.

Slave-dealers, gaining confidence from impunity, have made the seat of the Federal Government their head quarters for carrying on the domestic slave trade.

The public prisons have been extensively used (perverted from the purposes for which they were erected) for carrying on the domestic slave trade.

Officers of the Federal Government have been employed, and derived emoluments from carrying on the domestic slave trade.

Private and secret prisons exist in the District for carrying on this traffic in human beings.

The trade is not confined to those who are slaves for life, but persons having a limited time to serve are bought by the slave-dealers, and sent where redress is hopeless.

Others are kidnapped, and hurried away before they can be rescued.

Instances of death, from the anguish of despair, exhibited in the District, mark the cruelty of this traffic.

Instances of maiming and suicide, executed or attempted, have been exhibited, growing out of this traffic within the District.

Free persons of color, coming into the District, are liable to arrest, imprisonment, and sale into slavery for life, for jail fees, if unable, from ignorance, misfortune, or fraud, to prove their freedom.

Advertisements, beginning "We will give cash for one hundred likely young negroes of both sexes, from eight to twenty-five years old," contained in the public prints of the City, under the notice of Congress, indicate the openness and extent of the traffic.

Scenes of human beings exposed at public vendue are exhibited here, permitted by the laws of the General Government, a woman having been advertised "to be sold at Lloyd's tavern, near the Centre Market House," during all the month of December.

A Grand Jury of the District has presented the slave trade as a grievance.

A writer in a public print in the District has set forth "that to those who have never seen a spectacle of the kind (exhibited by the slave trade) no description can give an adequate idea of its horrors."

To such extent had this trade been carried, in 1816, that a member of Congress from Virginia introduced a resolution in the House, "That a committee be appointed to inquire into the existence of an *inhuman* and *illegal* traffic in slaves carried on in and through the District of Columbia, and report whether any, and what, measures are necessary for the putting a stop to the same."

The House of Representatives of Pennsylvania, at their last session, by an almost unanimous vote, expressed the opinion that slavery within the District of Columbia ought to be abolished.

Numerous petitions, from various parts of the Union, have been presented to Congress, praying for the revision of the laws in respect to slavery, and the gradual abolition of slavery within the District.

A petition was presented at the last session of Congress, signed by more than one thousand inhabitants of the District, praying for the gradual abolition of slavery therein.

AND WHEREAS the ten miles square, confided to the exclusive legislation of Congress, ought, for the honor of republican government and the interest of the District, to exhibit a specimen of pure and just laws :

*Be it resolved*, That the Committee on the District of Columbia be instructed to take into consideration the laws within the District in respect to slavery ; that they inquire into the slave trade as it exists in, and is carried on through, the District ; and that they report to the House such amendments to the existing laws as shall seem to them to be just.

*Resolved*, That the Committee be further instructed to inquire into the expediency of providing by law for the gradual abolition of slavery within the District, in such manner that the interests of no individual shall be injured thereby.

The consideration being called for, Mr. Miner demanded the ayes and noes ; which being taken, it was resolved to consider, ayes 104, noes 70.

Mr. WICKLIFFE then moved to strike out the preamble.

Mr. MINER observed, that as doubts had been expressed of the correctness of the allegations set forth in the preamble, it became his duty to the House to shew that they were well founded. His purpose in presenting the matter in this form was, to arrest the attention of the House, by concentrating, in the narrowest compass in his power, some general principles and striking facts, bearing upon the subject. In the first place, said Mr. M., I have set forth the constitutional power of Congress over this District. On this point, I suppose there can be no difference of opinion. In article 1, section 8, of the Constitution, it is declared that Congress shall have power "to exercise exclusive legislation, in all cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten miles square) as may, by cession of particular States, and the acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of Government of the United States." The words are full, clear, and explicit. The power extends to "legislation in all cases whatsoever." We, therefore, are the local as well as general legislature here. Maryland has no longer any authority : Virginia has no longer any legislative power within the District. If evils exist, we alone can remedy them. If injustice and oppression prevail, we are alone responsible. And here, Mr. Speaker, I would earnestly impress upon the House, that those who suffer evils which they alone have the power to prevent, are accountable for these evils. The legislature that permits bad laws to remain in force is not less responsible, before God and the world, for the injustice that re-

sults from them, than the legislature that enacts unjust laws, or the Government that perpetrates injustice. I am aware, sir, that the subject of slavery is one of great delicacy, exciting strong feelings whenever it is mentioned ; but it exists here, and exercises a large influence in the District ; yet, since the Federal Government was established in this place, it has been almost wholly neglected. Maryland, in the liberal spirit of the age, has softened the harsher features of her laws in respect to this class of persons. But the ameliorating influence in her statutes extends not within the limits she has ceded to us. The code of Virginia, I believe, has undergone salutary modifications. Our legislation has left the subject where we found it nearly thirty years ago. Gentlemen from the South did not feel it to be their duty to move in the matter : gentlemen from the North, seeing it created so much excitement whenever mentioned, have passed it by. In consequence of this neglect, as I shall shew you, have grown numerous corruptions, leading to cruelty and injustice that ought no longer to be tolerated.

And here, permit me to remark, sir, that the extreme sensitiveness, supposed to exist when slavery is mentioned, ought not, in my judgment, to prevail. It is a great political interest in the country, which the prescient eye of the statesman cannot fail to regard with interest. Confining myself to this District, slavery exists here, and, while it exists, must be regulated. Sooner or later it must become the subject of our legislation. Now, to my mind, there is nothing more clear than this, that every subject having a broad political bearing, or which it is our duty to regulate by legislation, ought, in these Halls, consecrated to the freedom of debate, to be spoken of by members freely, familiarly, and without even the apprehension of giving pain or offence. Certainly this, like every other matter, should be discussed in a suitable temper, and with a proper deference for the opinions, and delicacy for the feelings, of those who entertain different sentiments. As it regards slavery and the slave trade as they prevail within this District, having examined the subject with care, having visited your prisons and other scenes of wretchedness, as one of the local legislature, I have felt it my duty to bring the subject to your notice, in a manner, best calculated to awaken your attention to the evils that exist.

Among the allegations in the preamble, are these :—That slave dealers, gaining confidence from impunity, have made the Seat of the Federal Government their head-quarters for carrying on

the domestic slave trade : that the public prisons have been extensively used for carrying on the domestic slave trade ; and that officers of the Federal Government have been employed, and derived emoluments from carrying on this traffic. By papers furnished me by the keeper, it appears that there were sent to prison, for safe keeping, that is, as is well understood, for sale, and imprisoned as runaways :

	Safe keeping.	Taken up as runaways.
In 1824,	81	52
1825,	124	58
1826 and 1827,	156	101
1828,	91	79
	452	290

Debtors, and persons charged with criminal offences, of course, are not included in this statement. So that it would appear, in the last five years, more than four hundred and fifty persons had been confined in the public prison of the city—a prison under the control of Congress, and regulated by its laws—for sale—in the process of the slave trade. Such, said Mr. M., is not the intention for which the prison was erected. Pennsylvania, so far as she is concerned, and her means are appropriated to repair and keep up the prison, I am confident in saying, does not, and never has intended that it should be used for this purpose. On a former occasion, duty led me to make some statements respecting this matter before the House, which it may be proper to bring to mind. Visiting the prison in 1826, and passing through the avenues that lead to the cells, I was struck with the appearance of a woman having three or four children with her, one at the breast. She presented such an aspect of woe, that I could not help inquiring her story. It was simply this :—She was a slave, but had married a man who was free. By him she had eight or nine children. Moved by natural affection, the father labored to support the children, but as they attained an age to be valuable in market, perhaps ten or twelve, the master sold them. One after another was taken away and sold to the slave dealers. She had now come to an age to be no longer profitable as a breeder, and her master had separated her from her husband and all the associations of life, and sent her and her children to your prison for sale. She was waiting for a purchaser, and seemed to me to be more heart-broken than any creature I had ever seen. I am free to say, sir, and I would appeal to every gentleman who hears me, to say, if it is proper that the public prisons under our juris-



diction should be used to carry on a traffic which exhibits scenes like this. Of the four hundred and fifty others, I know nothing. I see no reason to suppose that there were not many cases of equal cruelty. Of the two hundred and ninety committed as runaways, many were delivered to their masters; some were sold for want of proof that they were free; and some proved their freedom, and were discharged. It seems to me a hardship, that persons born free in New York, Pennsylvania, or elsewhere, who perhaps never thought of a certificate of freedom, should, without any charge of crime, if they come within this District, be thrown into prison. Some proof, at least, ought to be made, raising a presumption that they are runaway slaves, before they should be deprived of personal liberty. A free man, poor, friendless, and ignorant, so arrested and confined in a cell of little more than ten feet square, would have but slight chance of asserting his rights. Five that were committed in 1826-7, without any proof of their being slaves, were sold for their jail fees and other expenses. I could wish, sir, we knew what they sold for, and what became of the money. It will be seen, on a moment's reflection, how strong the motive would be, on the part of the slave traders, and those who find it their interest to aid them, to seize upon persons who come into the District, to confine them closely in prison, to intercept their letters, to permit them to be sold, and to buy them in. The system naturally leads to fraud and injustice; in some instances, to great cruelty. In August, 1821, a black man was taken up and imprisoned as a runaway. He was kept confined until October, 1822—405 days. In this time, vermin, disease, and misery had deprived him of the use of his limbs. He was rendered a cripple for life, and finally discharged, as no one would buy him. Turned out upon the world, a miserable pauper: disabled by our means from gaining subsistence, he is sometimes supported from the poor house; sometimes craves alms in your streets. I cannot think that these things ought to be so. They appear to me as incompatible with our duty, and the interests of the District, as they are contrary to the principles of justice and the rights of humanity.\* For their services, it cannot be supposed that the Mar-

---

\* I was told that a lady and family, from New York, were passing through the District a year or two ago, on a visit to some Southern friends. A yellow woman accompanying her fell ill in the District, and she was obliged to leave her. On her recovery, she was seized on by the agents of the slave dealers, and imprisoned as a runaway; and was finally, by some process, either by sale or by some one claiming or pretending to claim her, made a slave of. The impression on my mind was, that gross injustice had been done, but I could not trace the facts so clearly as to warrant my mentioning the case to the House.

shal, and his deputies, the keepers of the prisons, go unrewarded. They are, I take it, federal officers, deriving their powers from the Federal Government. What is the amount of their fees and their perquisites, I have no means of knowing. Suppose fees and commissions, on each person, of 20 dollars—that would, on  $452 \times 20 = 9040$ , be upwards of nine thousand dollars in five years. Half that sum would be something considerable. Double this amount, if the prison at Alexandria should yield as much more, would be a large sum. The same amount on the persons imprisoned as runaways would make a large addition to their receipts. If a free man is sold for jail fees, if those fees amount to fifty dollars, and he sells for three hundred, does the Marshal retain the balance of three hundred, or does it go into the public treasury? I see no such item in the account of receipts. I mean not, by any remarks I make, to impeach or cast a reflection upon the Marshal, or any officer under him. The Marshal I have not the pleasure to know, and have no intention to censure. The system is, I presume, as he found it. The system is ours: we are responsible; and if there is blame, it rests mainly at our doors. Of the keeper of the prison, I am bound to say that his deportment has been uniformly correct, so far as it has come to my knowledge. While he is faithful, he is yet humane. Since my remarks on a former occasion, the prison and its discipline appear to be much improved, and the miseries of the wretched inmates alleviated as far as circumstances would admit.

Mr. Speaker: I have another case of hardship to bring to your notice. A man was taken up as a runaway, and advertised for sale. He protested that he was a free man. No proof to the contrary appeared. As the time of sale approached, a good deal of interest was excited for him, and two respectable citizens interposed in his behalf. They asked the delay of a short time, that the rights of the man might be ascertained. They went so far as to offer security for the payment of the fees, if the sale could be delayed. But I will read the evidence of what I state. Here Mr. M. read the following:

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, }  
 Washington County, } ss.

Appear before me, a Justice of the Peace in and for this county, Ezekiel Young and Josiah Bosworth, two respectable witnesses, and make oath, in due form of law, that, in the last Summer, they were at the jail of the county of Washington, in the said District, in behalf of a black man called James Green, who stated that he was free, and could prove his freedom, and had written on for the purpose: That they did importune with the Deputy Mar-

shal of this District to postpone the sale, and offered security for the fees; yet the said Deputy Marshal said he could not postpone the sale. He was then sold to a man who acknowledged himself a slave dealer, but said he would continue the slave here a few days, but did not. He was sold without any limitation of time of service, and no security was required of the slave dealer to retain him in the District.

Given under my hand and seal, this 28th January, 1828.

JNO. CHALMERS, J. P. [L. s.]

So the man was sold, and sent off by the slave dealers into hopeless bondage, though probably having as much right to freedom as we have. Will any one doubt but our laws need revision? Can any one who hears me question but that this whole matter needs to be looked into with a searching eye? If this event had happened in a distant country, how strongly would it have affected us? There is, in the public prints, an advertisement of a woman as a runaway, and that she will be sold for her jail fees. She is a yellow woman of about nineteen. She seems intelligent, and to have been well brought up. Her story is, that she is entitled to her freedom at twenty-five; but that her present master, who is a slave dealer, is trying to make her a slave for life. In this case, I do not think the confinement is intended to aid him. But it will be seen in a moment that when the subject passes by unheeded, a dealer, owning a servant who has two or three years to serve, may cause him to be arrested as a runaway, let him be sold for jail fees, have a trusty friend to buy him in, and thus convert a servant for a term of years into a slave for life. A more expeditious mode of proceeding, by which persons having a limited time to serve are deprived entirely of their rights, is thus: They are purchased up at cheap rates by the slave traders. They remove them to a great distance. It will be easily seen how small the chance that such persons would be able to preserve the proofs of their freedom, and how little would their protestations be heeded, without proof. They are carried where redress is hopeless. Thus the slave trade, as it exists, and is carried on here, is marked by instances of injustice and cruelty, scarcely exceeded on the coast of Africa. It is a mistake to suppose it is a mere purchase and sale of acknowledged slaves. The District is full of complaints upon the subject, and the evil is increasing. So long ago as 1802, the extent and cruelty of this traffic produced from a Grand Jury at Alexandria a presentment, so clear, so strong, and so feelingly drawn, that I shall make no apology for reading the whole of it to the House. Here Mr. M. read the following presentment of the Grand Jury:

January Term, 1802.

We, the Grand Jury for the body of the county of Alexandria, in the District of Columbia, present, as a grievance, the practice of persons coming from distant parts of the United States into this District, for the purpose of purchasing slaves, where they exhibit to our view a scene of wretchedness and human degradation, disgraceful to our characters as citizens of a free government.

True it is, that those dealers in the persons of our fellow-men collect within this District, from various parts, numbers of those victims of slavery, and lodge them in some place of confinement until they have completed their numbers. They are then turned out in our streets and exposed to view, loaded with chains, as though they had committed some heinous offence against our laws. We consider it a *grievance*, that citizens from distant parts of the United States should be permitted to come within this District, and pursue a traffic fraught with so much *misery* to a class of beings entitled to our protection by the laws of justice and humanity; and that the interposition of civil authority cannot be had to prevent parents being wrested from their offspring, and children from their parents, without respect to the ties of nature. We consider those grievances demanding legislative redress; especially the practice of making sale of black people, who are, by the will of their masters, designed to be free at the expiration of a term of years, who are sold, and frequently taken to distant parts, where they have not the power to avail themselves of that portion of liberty "which was designed for their enjoyment."

The National Legislature were too much engaged, or from other causes did not interpose, and the slave trade continued to increase in extent and enormity. In 1816, a distressing event, which created great excitement in the city, occasioned a movement in Congress in respect to the matter. [Mr. M. here read an extract from the Journal of the House.]

"On motion of Mr. Randolph,

"*Resolved*, That a Committee be appointed to inquire into the existence of an inhuman and illegal traffic in slaves, carried on in and through the District of Columbia, and report whether any, and what, measures are necessary for the putting a stop to the same."

If correctly informed, the immediate cause of the excitement was this: A woman, confined among others, in the upper chamber of a three story private prison, used by the slave dealers in their traffic, was driven, by sorrow and despair at the idea of being separated from all that she held dear, to throw herself from the window upon the pavement. She was shockingly mangled, and lingered a long while in misery. I do not wonder, that in a humane and Christian community, such an exhibition should create excitement. It does not seem to me that the laws of Congress ought to cherish, or even permit, a system within this District, naturally productive of such scenes. This account shows the horror of this traffic, and from this we may infer the cruelty that is hid from us in

those secret repositories of misery. There are several of these private prisons within the District; how many, I know not; but, from the information given me, I think the feelings of the House would be touched, could they see the cells, the fetters, and the chains they contain, without even a view of the victims that wear them. I hold some account of one of those prisons in my hand, said Mr. M., furnished me by a friend. I cannot read it without mentioning the names of several persons, and, as I wish to give neither pain nor offence to any one, in any thing I say, I will only advert to the matter generally. In a series of essays published in a respectable print in the District, in 1827, this subject was treated of. I know of no motive for exaggeration. Published on the spot where the facts are known, it is fair to presume the picture of the slave trade, as it prevails in the District, is true to the original. Here Mr. M. read from the Alexandria Gazette of June 22, 1827, the following paragraphs:

“Some years ago,” says our informant, “a colored woman, who had always been treated with kindness by her master, was sold by him to a person in this neighborhood, in order that she might be near her husband, who was also a slave. In the course of a few years she changed owners several times, and at length fell into the hands of the slave traders, who were making up a company for the Southern market. When these tidings were communicated to her, and she found that she must leave forever all the objects of her affections, to endure a life of misery in a distant land, she could not support the anguish it occasioned, and fell lifeless to the ground.”

Scarcely a week passes without some of these wretched creatures being driven through our streets. After having been confined, and sometimes manacled, in a loathsome prison, they are turned out in public view, to take their departure for the South. The children, and some of the women, are generally crowded into a cart or wagon, while the others follow on foot, not unfrequently handcuffed and chained together. To those who have never seen a spectacle of this kind, no description can give an adequate idea of its horrors. Here you may behold fathers and brothers leaving behind them the dearest objects of affection, and moving slowly along in the mute agony of despair—there the young mother sobbing over her infant, whose innocent smiles seem but to increase her misery. From some you will hear the burst of bitter lamentation, while from others the loud hysteric laugh breaks forth, denoting still deeper agony.

The District of Columbia is now made the depot for this disgraceful traffic.

This traffic, and the views it exhibits, I beg the House to be assured, are as offensive to the people of the District, as they are unjust in themselves, and impolitic in us to countenance. Can it be supposed otherwise without a reproach to the good sense and moral sensibility of its citizens? But the slave dealers feel themselves secure. They do not dread any expression of your displeasure. These scenes have been exhibited here by the slave dealers for nearly thirty years,

under your eye, and Congress has not moved to arrest their course. Your silence gives sanction to the trade. If an evil, you alone can correct it. If you take no steps to correct it, does not your silence imply acquiescence, if not approbation? Is it then strange that the slave dealers should gain confidence from impunity, and make this their head quarters for carrying on the domestic slave trade? Sir, this is made the great market for the sale and purchase of human flesh. It is carried on by the sanction of our permission. I have said that the people of the District are opposed to the continuance of slavery here. I had, at the last session of Congress, the honor to present a petition, signed by more than one thousand respectable citizens of the ten miles square, setting forth the evils that exist, and praying for the gradual abolition of slavery within the district.

To give the House a just view of the actual state of things here, Mr. M. said, he would read several advertisements from the public prints of this city. They would shew, not only the openness with which the slave dealers proceeded, but they would also shew that the sale of persons, men and women, at public auction, was a common practice, warranted by our laws, and permitted by the Federal Legislature. Here Mr. M. read the following advertisements, published in this city :

#### WE WILL GIVE CASH

For one hundred likely Young Negroes of both sexes, between the ages of 8 and 25 years. Persons who wish to sell would do well to give us a call, as the Negroes are wanted immediately. We will give more than any other purchasers that are in market, or may hereafter come into market.

Any letters addressed to the subscribers, through the post office at Alexandria, will be promptly attended to. For information, inquire at the subscribers', West end of Duke street, Alexandria, D. C.

Dec. 15—w3m

FRANKLIN & ARMPFIELD.

#### A NEGRO GIRL FOR SALE.

By virtue of a distrain, I shall sell, for cash, to the highest bidder, on Thursday, the 27th instant, at 10 o'clock, A. M. at Thomas Lloyd's tavern, near the Centre Market House, negro girl Margaret, about 14 years of age; taken as the property of William Harrison, and will be sold to satisfy house rent due in arrears to Thomas Havenner, administrator of John C. Dixon, deceased.

MERRIT TARLTON.

The above sale is postponed to Thursday next, the 4th December, same hour and place.

M. TARLTON, Bailiff.

Nov. 28—3t

The above sale is further postponed until Thursday, Dec. 11th, same hour and place.

M. TARLTON, Bailiff.

Dec. 5—3t

The above sale is still further postponed to Thursday next, same hour and place.

Dec. 12—3t.

The above sale is still further postponed until Thursday, 1st January, 1829, at the same hour and place, when it will positively take place.

Dec. 19—3t

MERRIT TARLTON.

### CASH! CASH! CASH!—AND NEGROES WANTED.

The subscriber will give the highest price, in cash, for likely sound young negro men, from 16 to 25 years, provided they can be had in time to be put on board the steamboat Potomac on next Wednesday evening. The subscriber can be seen at McCandless's tavern, High street, Georgetown, D. C.

Sept. 30—d7t

SAM'L J. DAWSON.

### CONSTABLE'S SALE.

In virtue of two writs of fieri facias, issued by Israel Little and Bernard Spalding, Esqs. Justices of the Peace for the county of Washington, District of Columbia, and to me directed, I shall expose to public sale, on Thursday, the 1st day of December next, one two-story house and lot, situate on South D street, and adjoining to the Eastern Free School; also, all the household and kitchen Furniture belonging to Edward D. Tippet, two hacks and horses, and a Negro Girl, aged 17 years. Seized and taken at the suit of William A. Smallwood and David Brearly.

Sale to commence at 11 o'clock, on the premises.

ENOCH BRYAN, Constable.

The above sales are postponed to the 13th inst. at the same hour and place, for the want of bidders.

E. BRYAN, Constable.

Dec. 9—

### CASH IN MARKET,

And high prices will be given for likely sound young Negroes. Those wishing to sell will do well to inquire soon at McCandless's Tavern, in Georgetown, D. C., where they will find a purchaser.

Dec. 3—

JESSE BERNARD.

### CONSTABLE'S SALE.

By virtue of two writs of fieri facias, issued by Israel Little, a Justice of the Peace for the county of Washington, and to me directed, I shall expose to sale, for cash, on Saturday, 30th of December, 1825, at the Navy Yard Market House, at 8 o'clock, A. M., one Negro Man. Seized, and taken as the property of Mrs. Dorothy Wales, to satisfy debts due Edward Simmes and William R. Maddox.

Dec. 24—

ENOCH BRYAN, Constable.

So that a Constable has power, the least responsible officer known to our laws, under our Federal authority, to set up and sell a man or woman at the public market house. I cannot think, said Mr. M. that this is right. I do not think that these are proper scenes to be exposed at the seat of the General Government. Such exhibitions, some years ago, were presented in New York; and I recollect that the mechanics and merchants of that city formed an association, resolving that they would do no business with an auctioneer who should sell human beings at auction; and an end was put to the practice.

Aside from the injustice and cruelty to individuals practised under the laws as they now exist, permit me, Mr. Speaker, to consider the subject in a more enlarged and national point of view. We are acknowledgedly the principal republic on the

globe. Justice and equal rights are professedly at the foundation of our government. The Congress of the United States, and their proceedings, are viewed with solicitude by intelligent men throughout the world. Despotism must look with keen desire for our failure: the friends of civil liberty look with not less anxious hope for our prosperity and success. If we fail, the great cause of freedom will be lost forever. As we succeed, the sacred principles of the rights of man gain strength and will extend their influence. The people have confided to Congress exclusive legislation over ten miles square: a little spot, from which local jealousies and sectional rivalries should alike be excluded. Within this limit the wisdom and the power of the republic may operate with the most unrestricted freedom. Here, it might fairly be expected, should be exhibited to the nation and to the world a specimen of the purest laws and the most perfect legislation. Legal injustice and oppression should be unknown within the District. In relation to the moral power of this Government, in regard to the effect, at home and abroad, of our example, it would seem to me that we are called upon by the most weighty considerations to render the laws here as perfect as it is in human power and human wisdom to make them. Suppose a distinguished foreigner, of correct and expanded views, who has listened with interest to the accounts of our republic, and whose mind is imbued with the liberal principles of the age, is resolved to visit us. He leaves the despotic shores of the European continent with delight. He prays for impelling gales to waft him to this land of justice and freedom. The ten miles square, where the united wisdom and unrestricted power of the nation operate—with what elastic hope and anxious pleasure does he pursue his way to this city. And what objects are here presented to his view? At one market he meets a crowd; and, as he passes near, behold it is a constable exhibiting a woman for sale, subjected to the scoffs and jeers of the unfeeling! He is selling her for a petty debt, under the authority of the sanction of Congress! Well may he exclaim “the age of chivalry is indeed gone forever!” To remove the painful impression, he takes up a newspaper of the District, and reads “cash in the market, and the highest price” for men and women. He walks abroad, and sees a gang of slaves handcuffed together, a long chain running between them and connecting the whole: miserable objects of horror and despair, marching off under the command of the slave-traders! What must be his feelings—what his report when he shall return? This District ought to be the best governed in the universe. It is absolute-



ly the worst. It would not be going much too far to say that there is more crime and more misery here than in any other spot of equal extent on the globe. In 1826 and 27, there were no less than six hundred and thirty-four persons committed to the prison in this city for debt! What a horrible state of things must exist, when, in so small a population, more than six hundred persons, in two years, are deprived of their personal freedom, and degraded by being thrown into jail without pretence of crime. It is shocking! It is appalling! Within the same two years there were no less than three hundred and thirty-four persons committed to this jail for criminal offences. This is independent of those committed at Alexandria; for there are two public prisons in the District. Did any body before ever hear of such a thing in a Christian and civilized country? It would seem to me that such scenes are calculated greatly to weaken the moral power of the Government, and to impair the just respect in which it should be held by the nations of the earth. The reasons which may be supposed to operate in favor of the continuance of slavery elsewhere, do not exist here. The number is not so great as to present any formidable impediment to the extinction of the evil. Here are no rice lands to cultivate: nothing to be done but what might as well be done, and better, by a free white population, than by slaves.

My intention is to keep within the District; but it may not be wandering from its interests, if I suggest that, in my opinion, nothing can contribute more to the insecurity of slave property, than instances of cruelty, shocking to the moral sense, publicly exhibited; that the South are therefore interested to put a stop to the slave trade here.

All that is gained by the introduction of slaves from the north, is more than counterbalanced, I should suppose, by the ill effects of introducing strangers of unsettled habits, many of them desperate characters, some of them entertaining high notions of independence, and a knowledge of their power. A third proposition presses upon my mind, and I submit it for consideration. That the frequent exhibition of scenes of injustice to colored persons within this District, so much frequented by foreigners and our own countrymen, keeps alive the excitement, sometimes complained of; that, therefore, it is the true policy of the south to permit, without opposition, the abolition of slavery here. If I mistake not, Louisiana has prohibited the introduction, for sale, of slaves from other States, intending to put a stop to the domestic slave trade. A propo-

sition, having the same object, I have seen it stated, is before the Legislature of Kentucky. One thing seems very clear, that, to those portions of country which furnish slaves for the market, the trade cannot fail to be injurious. The young, the athletic, the able working hands are purchased up and sent off, leaving the old, the decrepid, and those too young to labor, to be supported. The working bees are taken from the hive, and the drones left to consume. It would seem to me impossible but that such a traffic must lead to poverty.

The measures which I propose to you I know have the decided approbation of a large portion of the People of Pennsylvania. They consider, and they consider rightly, that this District is national in interest and aspect. The whole People have an interest here : what exists and takes place here concerns all. The public buildings belong to the People : the Government is the Government of the People. Every citizen is interested in what concerns the government, the policy, the laws, and the prosperity of this city and District. At the last session of the Assembly of Pennsylvania, the House of Representatives passed the following resolution by an almost unanimous vote :

*Resolved, &c.* That it be earnestly recommended to the Senators and Representatives of this State in the Congress of the United States, to use their efforts to accomplish the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, in such manner as they may consider consistent with the rights of individuals, and the Constitution of the United States."

Many thousand citizens have petitioned, from time to time, that Congress would take this matter into consideration, and provide by law for the gradual abolition of slavery at the Seat of the General Government. The sentiment is becoming stronger and stronger every day, throughout the Nation, that the power of Congress should be exercised to clear out the mass of iniquity and oppression which has fixed itself here, and like a stagnant pool generates all manner of corruptions, producing a moral pestilence, which the interest and the honor of the country equally call upon us to exert our authority to remove. Of the interior of the secret prisons, our knowledge is, of course, extremely imperfect ; but a letter which I hold in my hand, written by a gentleman of Alexandria, every way to be relied upon, states—[Here Mr. Miner read from the letter:]

"Almost every week, droves are brought into town, of ten or twelve, all chained together. Some time since, a person observed twenty-two or three come out of the cellar of a small house, where they had been stowed for some time. He thought it must surely be contrary to the *law*, that so many should be placed in so small an apartment, and inquired of one of the civil officers,

how many slaves it was lawful to place in a small damp cellar. The officer replied, 'As many as it will hold.' The same thing exists with regard to *shipping* them : they may place as many in a vessel as it will hold."

There is one case more to which I invite attention, and especially that of the gentleman from Maryland, who doubts the correctness of any part of the preamble. I presume the facts will not be new to him ; and if any error should exist in my statement, he can correct me. The circumstance to which I allude occurred last Winter, during the sitting of Congress. A colored man, who was free, had married a woman who was a slave. By her he had several children. He was industrious, respectable, had acquired some property, and was the commander of a boat that plied from the place where he lived to Baltimore. The master of his wife died, and the man attended the sale of his effects, and purchased in his wife and children. For all this I have authority which the gentleman will not question. She was then his by marriage and by purchase, by the double right of the laws of God and man. He left home on a trip to Baltimore, doubtless cheered to increased exertions by the prospect of happiness that opened upon him. On his return, his wife and children were gone : he sought for them in the neighborhood ; they could not be found. I cannot pretend to say, with certainty, what were the feelings of the poor negro on the occasion. I know no reason why he should not feel like ourselves. And what would be the painful surprise, gradually heightening to the agony of despair, if any member of this House, who is a husband and a father, should return and find his house desolate, his wife and children gone, he knew not where ? The man hastened to his former master for advice and aid. The gentleman to whom he applied, whatever may be his speculative notions on these subjects, is humane : has a tender heart for human suffering, and a quick sense of indignation at injustice. He gave the man a letter to an influential citizen of Alexandria, to make inquiry at a private prison in that city, whether the lost wife and children were there. The inquiry was made. The wife and children had been there, but the slave dealers had removed them beyond reach : they had been marched off with a gang that had been collected for a distant market, and they were lost to him forever. By whose fraud, by what treachery, this dark deed of iniquity was perpetrated, I cannot tell. The crime, though not wholly committed, was consummated in this District. By permitting, and thereby sanctioning the slave trade here, we encourage these scenes of injustice. Sir, if such an event

as this had happened in Greece, if the Turks had committed such an outrage on human rights, this whole nation would have been in commotion. Money would have been raised, and sent off by thousands, for the relief or redemption of the captives. Aye, sir, and we should send out missionaries to enlighten and convert the misguided heathen who should perpetrate such acts of flagrant cruelty.

The remark has often been made, and the events of our day show its correctness, that examples of times past move men, beyond comparison, more than those of their own times. We accustom ourselves to what we see. The Inquisition is to us a subject of horror: and yet the man, who, half a century ago, or even at a later time, should in Spain have proposed its abolition, I dare say, by honest but mistaken zeal, would have been deemed impious. Distance and time magnify objects. We feel deeply for the sufferings of Ireland; we weep for the miseries of the Greeks; but we suffer, in a race of a different color, under our own eye and our own jurisdiction, scenes of greater cruelty and injustice than are acted on the other side of the Atlantic. We move on the surface of the stream, where the sun-beams play, and where the glittering waves sparkle with hope, and joy, and pleasure; and we pass on, unconscious of the dark counter-current that flows beneath, embittered by the tears, and impelled by the sighs of the wretched.

You denounce the foreign slave trade as piracy, and punish it with death. Why do you do so? Because it is cruel and unjust: it separates husband and wife, parent and child, and tears the inhabitants of Africa from the home of their childhood or their choice. And wherein does your domestic slave trade, as it exists, and is carried on through this District, differ from that on the coast of Africa, except that this is near, and that at a distance? Are not all the sympathies of our nature, which we are taught to regard as sacred, violated and crushed by it without hesitation or remorse? Are not husband and wife, parent and child, separated daily? and are not the objects of the traffic torn from the scenes to which their hearts have become knit by the closest and tenderest ties? I have mentioned some instances of the dread, the utter horror, and consequent unutterable distress, that this trade produces. There is a man now in this District, who was in the hands of the slave dealers, about to be sent off to the South, when he laid his left hand on a block, and with an axe severed it from his arm. Can the slave trade on the coast

of Africa be more horrible, more dreaded, or more prolific of scenes of misery? Does it produce scenes more touching, more deeply crimsoned with iniquity? To me all this is dreadful; and I think it should be tolerated no longer here.

My duty on this occasion leads me into no discussion of slavery in the abstract. I speak as one of the local Legislature. I would advise to that course which would be best for the prosperity of the District. The People have established this as the seat of empire. The Republic is rapidly growing into greatness; and the city must naturally grow with its growth, and strengthen with its strength. The position is well chosen, the situation most beautiful: no one more earnestly than myself wishes to see it in the highest degree prosperous. But it would seem to be the part of wisdom, in laying the foundations for the seat of Government of a great empire, intended to endure for ages, that they should be laid strong and deep, leaving nothing to impede its growth or impair its prosperity. In looking at the census of the District, I find the following the number of inhabitants:

	White population.	Colored.
In 1800	10,666	4,027
1820	22,614	10,335

By which it will be seen that the colored population has increased in a more rapid ratio than the white. The white population, to have kept its relative number, should have reached nearly 26,000. To what result this state of things must lead, every gentleman will judge. And what are the effects of this population now on the prosperity and improvement of the city and District? They must be obvious to a moment's reflection. Every person who visits this city, I presume, is struck, as I was, with the beauty of the main avenues, the magnificence of the public buildings, and the heart-chilling desolation and sterility that reign all round them. Where the overflowings of the public Treasury find their way, the city seems prosperous; almost every where else, neglected and desolate. The blacks are a degraded cast, generally without industry, enterprise, or property: there are honorable exceptions among them; but, as a general rule, they build no houses, they plant no gardens, they cultivate voluntarily no land: without enterprise, or the ordinary motives for enterprise, they strike out no new plans of business, enter into no commercial speculations, they set in motion no manufactures, or any thing else that is calculated to increase the wholesome business, or improve the appearance of the city. Suppose, sir,

instead of these ten thousand negroes, there existed a free white population. what would be the certain consequences? Besides your avenues, your streets would be rapidly built upon, and be alive with the bustle of profitable business. Building lots in the extremest part of the city would be in demand and rise in prices; snug cottages would be seen rising in every direction. Every lot that was built upon—every field that was cultivated, would render the adjoining ground more valuable, and operate as an inducement to some one else to build upon or to cultivate it. Business begets business; prosperity is the parent of prosperity. The lands here may be rendered profitably productive. There is a garden of three acres upon the plain which lies under our eye from this building. The gardener told me that it produced one year a thousand dollars from sales of vegetables in the market, and the year preceding, twelve hundred dollars. This shews how extremely productive a part of the land would be if improved and well managed. But the black population will never do this; and unless some salutary change, going to the root of this evil, is made, this scene of sterility may last for ages.

What, Mr. Speaker, has built up Ohio? That State, within the remembrance of most of us, was a wilderness, a vast forest, inhabited only by the savage. It is now, probably, the third State in the Union, in numbers and productiveness. It has not been made so by men of wealth; comparatively few great capitalists have gone there; no great companies have produced the result. Ohio has risen into greatness by the enterprise and industry of individual citizens, each acting for himself, under the inspiring influence of liberty. Ohio owes her prosperity and power to the irresistible energy of freedom.\*

\* I would bring that energy to operate here. I see no reason why this city, and Georgetown, and Alexandria, should not become the seats of extensive commercial enterprise. The harbors are noble; the country around may be made productive; and when the Ohio and Chesapeake Canal is completed, the produce of the Western world will be wafted here to find a market. But it is not in the nature of things, that, with so extensive a substratum of inert, ignorant population, the District can become commercially prosperous. In the Eastern cities, in nine cases in ten, men who enter most largely into successful shipping business and other useful enterprises, are those who have begun life poor and in humble stations, and gradually acquired influence and credit. If ten thousand free white persons were here, instead of that number of negroes, many of them would, in the ordinary course of nature, be men of genius and enterprise. They would educate their children, many of whom would doubtless enter into active business, greatly to their own advantage and that of the country around. Every honorable motive would stimulate them to

There is one more view in which duty obliges me to present this matter. I regard it as one important in its bearing upon

action. Suppose them all, in the first place, poor and in humble life, still the result would, in time, be the same : ambition, the desire of distinction, as well as the love of property, would stimulate them to exertion. Some of the young men would shoot up into public life, and occupy high stations; and this would prove a source of emulation, an incentive to others, leading to beneficial results. Instead of society being severed horizontally, from the humblest to the highest there would be a thousand ties of connexion, binding the whole together in the bonds of interest and affection. I see no reason why ships should not be seen clearing out for the India trade ; others on voyages for whaling and sealing ; squadrons of small vessels, but richly laden with canal produce, for the West Indies ; importing ships arriving from Europe, to furnish supplies to the West. With a proper population, all this would happen naturally and in the ordinary course of things. Alexandria is beautifully and advantageously situated for a noble city. Such a state of things as the entire change of the population, as I have suggested, would give to her prosperity the most immediate and happy impulse. Buildings would increase in value ; building lots rise rapidly ; property along the wharves become in demand ; there would be heard the hammer of the carpenter, the "mort" of the mason, the "yeo heavo" of the seaman at the water side ; and that beautifully located city would be, what I ardently long to see her, all alive with useful business and permanent prosperity. Look at Liverpool. Many friends of that city seriously thought the abolition of the slave trade would ruin the place ; and many think now, if the slave trade, the deadening, withering, paralyzing slave trade, in Alexandria, were put a final stop to, the place would be injured. Look at Liverpool, the first and most flourishing commercial city in Europe. So, in a great measure, would Alexandria be benefitted by clearing out that traffic, and introducing a free white population in place of that of a different description, which now exists there.

Washington and Georgetown are running rapidly into one. Both will prosper together ; and the general remarks made in respect to Alexandria will apply here. Once more : suppose the end I aim at accomplished, a thing most easy of execution, by which no one person should suffer in interest or convenience, and look again to the consequences. Instead of the desolate prospect which meets the eye as you look in any direction from the public avenues, you would then see cottages, rows of houses, the seats of industry and competence. The whole District would bloom with delightful gardens, producing fruits and flowers, and every good thing the earth can bear—the hills in every direction would smile with cultivation and plenty. Eager purchasers would be seeking to buy lands, miles from the Capitol, either for farming or country seats. The wholesome population would rapidly increase ; the demand for every sort of marketing would be greatly extended ; the country, in every direction, for thirty miles round, would feel the beneficial effects of the change ; there would be, within that distance, a rapid rise and spirited demand for farms ; many persons who have now four or five hundred acres would sell the half for enough to live comfortably on the interest ; and the remaining part would be worth more than the whole in the present state of things. To be a little more particular—let us inquire what effect substituting a white free population for the black race that is now here would have upon the various conditions of people who now do business in the city. The schoolmaster ? Ah, he would be benefitted, there can be no doubt. The shoemaker ? An abundance of additional business would flow to his shop. The cabinetmaker ? The girls, when they married, would need bureaux, tables, bedsteads, and cradles. The merchant ? Profitable industry

the public welfare. The Republic has concentrated here vast interests—the public buildings, the national archives, the navy yard—a vast deal of public property—and what is far more valuable, the distinguished men of the nation, the patriots and statesmen, who officiate as the agents of the people, in conducting the affairs of the Government. Now, Mr. Speaker, to me it appears it would be wise to surround those persons and these great interests by their natural defence, a free white militia. You have ten thousand of a degraded cast here, into whose hands you place no arms. They are not only not a source of strength, but a negative quantity in the account. Do you believe, sir, this city would have been taken or even attempted by the British, if, instead of this population, you should have had here the

always adds to his sales and his profits. The stage and steamboat proprietors? Then free white persons and their families would visit and be visited. The tavern-keeper? Besides political visitors to the seat of Government, there would then be merchants flocking here with pockets full of money, for the purposes of trade. The carpenter, the stone-mason, the bricklayer—all would find increased employment. Who would suffer? Who would not be benefitted? And then the places of religious worship would be crowded. Young men of enterprise, attracted by the growing greatness of the place, would flock in, and every girl who would accept a sweetheart might be married. Is this a fancy sketch, or am I describing what has in effect taken place in the western part of New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio? Such, I do solemnly believe, would be the results of the measure I propose. I think no one can doubt the sincerity of my professions of ardent good will towards this City and District. I have voted for every measure which its friends thought might be useful to advance its prosperity. I never gave a more cheerful vote in my life than that to subscribe a million of dollars to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. I would open every possible avenue to its prosperity and greatness. It belongs to the Republic. This place is strictly national. Here the whole People have a direct interest. To the extent of my power and influence, I would make it the queen of cities, worthy of the Republic which has laid its foundation and made it the residence of its Government; worthy the noble States which ceded to us the jurisdiction; and worthy the venerated name it bears.

I have not moved in this matter without great consideration and care. I have taken the utmost pains to inform myself of the actual condition of things here. To this end, I have again and again visited your prisons, and other recesses of misery. Information I have sought from every source. Some who knew much, and had promised to unfold to me their knowledge, have, from some secret influence that I could not discover, folded themselves up in the most cautious reserve. To many gentlemen of the highest respectability and intelligence, both in the city and Alexandria, I with pleasure acknowledge myself indebted for information and aid. Entertaining liberal views, they were above the prejudices of habit and the influence of temporary interests, and, looking to the permanent prosperity of the District, are zealous advocates for wiping out the stain which rests upon it. The slave dealers, and those who, through them, make money by continuing the traffic, have a vast influence here. The nuisance is not to be abated without an effort. The evil is not to be remedied without a struggle. The cancer is not to be eradicated without a careful and firm hand. But I trust the issue may be successful.



same number of the sort of people that defended Stonington? My word for it, they would not have dared to make the attempt. At that period, if I have been rightly informed, they were an object of alarm instead of reliance; and while your young men were drawn away to a distance from the city, the old men formed themselves into guards to protect the place from intestine danger. It does appear to me that this ought not to be so. If the population were changed, your laboring men, attached to the Government by interest and sentiment, would rally among its most efficient defenders. A positive evil would be removed—a positive good placed in its stead, doubling the benefit. Does any one who hears me doubt the wisdom of this? If this population increases as it has done, I appeal to gentlemen, if, in times of great excitement, it might not be aroused and wielded by unprincipled men to the most dangerous purposes.

In every aspect in which I have been able to view the matter, I am satisfied the inquiries I have submitted should be answered in the affirmative. I would not be rash—I would propose no sudden disruption of existing interest—I am no friend to sudden revolutions—what I would propose would be that measures should be adopted to effect the abolition of slavery here gradually. The slave trade, and the public sale of men and women, I would instantly interdict. Provision ought to be made that no person should be injured in his interest to the least amount. Should any such case occur, ample indemnity should be given. Ten years is much in a man's life, yet it is a brief space in the life of a city. The change ought to be so gradual it should be only felt and known by the blessings and prosperity it would shed abroad over the whole District. By a law that should protect the District from being over-run by free negroes, which should exclude the further introduction of slaves to reside here permanently, and which should provide that persons born after a certain period, to be fixed upon, should be free, with other salutary regulations, this degraded cast would gradually disappear like darkness before the opening day.

---

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES—No. 1.

A gentleman, opposed to emancipation, said to me the other day, If you disturb this matter it will have a tendency to unsettle the Government here. A word on that point.—I fondly hope the Seat of Government is permanently fixed, and may remain a thousand years. If such an idea is running through the District, it must have been started by interest to operate on prejudice. The direct contrary is the correct view in which the matter should be regard-

ed. What but public sentiment can keep the Government here? What could give more force to the sentiment, favorable to its continuance, than to see the City well governed, and becoming a beautiful and prosperous place? On the other hand, what is more calculated to impair respect for, and to wear the affections from, the place, and leave impressions on the mind, of horror and disgust, than the scenes daily exhibited here by the process of the slave trade; the sale of human beings at auction; and the consequent low vice and squalid misery of the degraded cast of population which the existing laws tolerate, if they do not invite?

### No. 2.

A gentleman of intelligence told me that much of the labor here had been done by persons from the neighboring country sending their slaves into the District to work. Their wages, of course, were drawn away to be expended elsewhere. In some cases, slaves who can be relied on are sent into the District to seek work—to saw wood, work at the brick kilns, &c. The master allows them 75 cents a week to live upon; and the temptation to pilfer or beg becomes irresistible. Servants in families, who see the poor creatures in want, are sometimes induced to secrete provisions for them. The whole system is as injurious to the prosperity of the place as it well can be.

### No. 3.

A paper from the Grand Jury of the District has been laid before Congress. True, it opposes emancipation, until means can be devised to get rid of the slaves when emancipated, but admits slavery here to be an evil. This presentation is admirably written, bearing the impress of a powerful mind; but the Jury was wholly mistaken if they supposed it was the intention of any one to free the slaves now here. The desire would be to do what was done in Pennsylvania and other States; provide that those born after a certain period, to be fixed upon, should be held to service only for a limited time, so that the evil should gradually disappear.

Except this single point, the Grand Jury agree with me entirely. They denounce the slave trade in the most indignant terms. It is greatly to their honor. They propose that the further introduction of slaves or free negroes should be prohibited. I am extremely happy to be sustained by authority so respectable. Of the practices under the slave trade they speak as being "such as to excite the most painful feelings," as exhibiting "revolting spectacles." The Jury also state it, as a fact *known*, "that those engaged in such pursuits are OFTEN found evading the laws for the protection of the free, and concealing and taking away by FRAUD OR FORCE, as slaves, such as are entitled to their *freedom!*" The Grand Jury go on to state that "it is difficult, if not impossible, in MANY CASES, either to restrain or prevent acts of the GROSSEST OPPRESSION and INJUSTICE." The Jury further say, "It is believed that the WHOLE COMMUNITY would be gratified by the interference of Congress, for the suppression of these receptacles and the exclusion of this DISGUSTING TRAFFIC from the District.

I have thought this notice of their proceedings due to myself. And what a dreadful picture of crime and misery does the Jury present! Grasping AVARICE, heartless FRAUD, and daring FORCE, under the very eye of Congress, succeeding in taking away, as slaves, those *who are entitled to freedom!* Your laws violated with impunity—scenes of the *grossest oppression and injustice exhibited*. Before Heaven, I think it was time that some one, at a distance or near by, should move to correct these abuses.



